

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Message (MSG)

Spiritual Gifts

12 ¹⁻³ What I want to talk about now is the various ways God's Spirit gets worked into our lives. This is complex and often misunderstood, but I want you to be informed and knowledgeable. Remember how you were when you didn't know God, led from one phony god to another, never knowing what you were doing, just doing it because everybody else did it? It's different in this life. God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can. For instance, by using your heads, you know perfectly well that the Spirit of God would never prompt anyone to say "Jesus be damned!" Nor would anyone be inclined to say "Jesus is Master!" without the insight of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁻¹¹ God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

- wise counsel
- clear understanding
- simple trust
- healing the sick
- miraculous acts
- proclamation
- distinguishing between spirits
- tongues
- interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.

The winds of the Spirit are blowing at Hill Avenue Grace.

The winds of the Spirit are blowing in this world.



We sometimes wonder about the spiritual weather; when the winds of the spirit bow. We are a Spirit driven congregation.

Talk of the Spirit is becoming more frequent these days. When you feel out of control, you long for a greater power to swoop in and make everything all right.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

There are times, when I feel overwhelmed by problems. Do you feel the same way? We welcome all the help we can get. Bring on the Holy Spirit!

- Sometimes the problems that keep us up at night, yearning for the Holy Spirit, are large and far reaching: environmental degradation, gun violence, systemic racism, rape culture.
- Sometimes our desire for a miracle is focused on more mundane realities: getting over a cold, finding a nursery attendant, finishing a sermon.

For Jesus’ mother, the problem was that the wine had run out at the wedding party. She knows that only divine intervention can save the party guests from disappointment and the newly married couple from shame. Fortunately, she knows someone who can work miracles.

Transforming water into wine was Jesus’ first miracle (or sign) in the Gospel of John. A lighthearted, simple little miracle, that is, until you considered the servants’ perspective. Jesus tells them to fill the nearby jars with water, “and they filled them up to the brim.” This one short sentence describes so much work.

These servants (men and women) fill up six stone jars, probably similar to this one, down front. It holds 30–35 gallons. Even empty, the jars would be extremely heavy; filled with about 200 pounds of water each, they would be nearly impossible to move. And without faucets or hoses, this water would most likely have to be drawn from a well.

Miracles can be hard work. Not just for the person performing the miracle, but for anyone who happens to be in the general vicinity and gets drafted into service.

- The servants have to fill up the jars.
- The disciples have to hand out food to more than 5,000 people—and pick up the leftovers.
- Those who love Lazarus have to push the stone from his tomb’s entrance and remove the grave cloths from his resurrected body.

Miracles may be *inspired and holy and wonderful*, but they are not easy.



Because you are gifted by the Spirit of God ... you perform miracles.

I want you to think about your personal involvement with the Spirit. Think about the gifts you have.

Perhaps you have you changed someone's life forever...and didn't even know it?

We who have received and accepted the gifts of the Spirit are capable of everyday miracles.

- Reaching out to touch another,
- sharing our courage or humor,
- inspiring someone to be true to themselves,
- empathizing with someone hurting,
- responding with compassion to another's need –

All of these things are The way in which the Spirit works through us, and allows that we influence others each and every day.

Each and every act of compassion, empathy, courage, and concern is a miracle in that it defies the worldly wisdom that says that there's never enough to go around in this dog-eat-dog world.

In the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Notice that Jesus didn't say *we ought to be* salt and light, and He doesn't provide directions on *how to become* salt and light, and He doesn't *threaten us if we don't act like* salt and light.

Rather, Jesus promised that we are – *already!* – salt and light.

The Spirit gives us the gifts of wisdom and prophecy and healing and interpretation. We must allow the Spirit to work in us.

People are using their spiritual gifts, to be sure, but that doesn't mean it is easy. It is, however, joyful.

Paul insists that it is the Spirit of God, that empowers the people of the church.

He reminds us that it is God who activates the gifts and God whom we serve with them. When our focus is on God rather than ourselves, we find joy in the



process of working with God—even when the work is hard, even when the outcomes are not what we want.

We also find joy in the abundance God provides: there are varieties of gifts, services, and activities.

Everyone “is given the manifestation of the Spirit” for the good of everyone. The Spirit’s gifts are abundant; they overflow within the church.

Jesus’ first miracle (sign) in John flows with abundance. How much wine does a wedding party need? There is an abundance.

Yet the servants fill the jars “up to the brim.” These jars that hold far more than is possibly needed were nevertheless filled completely.

And when the miracle occurred, it was not a miracle to make ends meet, to help the couple manage. Rather, it was a miracle of abundance. Gallons and gallons of good wine, wine that impresses the steward. Wine that reveals the glory of God.

What is revealed in your spiritual weather report; as the spirit blows?

